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Language Learning Strategies: A Primer

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LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES:

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LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES: A PRIMER

The question of why some learners acquire a second language more quickly than others has long been a problem for language teachers. Even when students seem basically equal in terms of opportunity and intelligence, progress can vary greatly. Variations in the language learning strategies students employ could explain why some students do better than others. Students can profitably explore the area of language learning strategies to become more aware and successful learners.

This paper begins by defining language learning strategies as the tools learners use to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning and to make that learning more efficient. Different types of strategies are then presented, together with their characteristics and classification. The final section deals with the question of how learning strategies should be taught.

Learning Strategies, Learner Training, Teacher Improvement

Chapter

Only a cynic would argue with the statement that most people learn their native language with a fair degree of success. Although some people seem to have more verbal skills than others, almost everyone can acquire his or her first language easily and well. Why is it, then, that the success record for acquiring competence in a second language in a formal instructional setting is so poor for so many students? What makes some foreign language learners succeed- often in spite of the teacher, the textbook, or the classroom situation- while others fail to acquire certain basic skills, even in the best of circumstances? Omaggio, 1978

INTRODUCTION

I have studied three languages: French in high school, Russian in college and Japanese as an adult. My experience with French was dismal. I was given the impression that I just did not have the "knack" for mastering a foreign language. I was told that I did not have a "good ear". By the time I got into college apparently my ears had improved because now I had a "good ear", but I still was by no means breaking any language acquisition records. I made Bs with little trouble, only to forget what I had learned immediately following the exams.

Then, after becoming a teacher of English as a foreign language and after doing coursework in education and learning, I began studying Japanese. Everything started coming easily. I progressed more quickly than colleagues and classmates in similar circumstances. The time we spent in class and studying did not vary significantly, yet my Japanese became better, faster. Over the years something had changed. I was no more or less intelligent than before, but suddenly I was a "good language learner", whereas before I had been mediocre at best.

In the same way, as a teacher, I have seen great differences in the rate at which my students acquire English. Students who seemed to have it all: the intelligence, the

motivation, the opportunities sometimes just did not improve despite all my efforts. Others seemed to just suck in that language at a rate for which I could not take credit.

There is a difference in the way these good learners and bad learners act. There was a difference between what I was doing as a learner in high school and what I was doing as an adult learner. As an adult who knew about language and language learning, I took charge of my own learning, testing what worked for me and what did not, setting my own goals.

Language learning strategies include both ways of learning and the planning for that learning. In this paper I will explore the topic of language learning strategies in an attempt to better understand my own progress as a learner and that of my students. In reality there is no one easy answer to the question of why second and foreign language acquisition rates vary so greatly. However research indicates that differences in language learning strategies are a substantial part of the key. I think it is very important to give learners opportunities to be aware and in control of their own learning. After all, that awareness helped transform me from a lost cause to a competent learner. There are quite a number of students who need to know they are not a lost cause.

It seems intuitively correct to say that the one primarily responsible for learning is the learner. With the mass of information available at any given moment, the learner is constantly making choices about what to notice and remember, as well as how to do so. A central assertion of cognitive learning theory explained by Chamot,

> indicates that learning is an active, dynamic process in which learners select information from the environment, organize the information, relate it to what they already know, retain what they consider to be important, use the information in appropriate contexts, and reflect on the success of their learning efforts.[1]

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[1]Anna Uhl Chamot and J. Michael O'Malley, The CALLA Handbook: Implementing the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (Reading, MA: Addison Wesley, 1994): p. 13.

David Barnes puts it more simply, "To get knowledge from out there to in here is for the learner himself to do. The art of teaching is to help the learner in this process."[2]

School learning should never be an end in and of itself. If the student uses knowledge only to fill in the answers on a test or get a good grade, what is the point? The twelve or thirteen years of studying that children do in school is not itself the goal, rather it should be the prelude to a lifetime of learning. Students studying a foreign language sometimes have as little as an hour a week in class. It is how they use and expand what they learn in class that determines their success or failure. Immigrants perhaps spend a few hours a week in an adult ESL or public school bilingual class to help prepare them to face the demands of jobs, studies and survival. However, it is how they analyze and handle those demands that determines how much they learn. The majority of opportunities for real-life learning, those moments of discovery, happen outside the classroom far from the teacher's control. Language learning like that of any complex cognitive process, cannot and should not be contained within classroom walls. Without the learner as an active participant, no class - no matter how good the teacher - is enough to meet the complex demands of learning a new language. Maybe that hopeless student is just one who has not learned to manage and facilitate his own learning effectively.

Anita Wenden cites the old saying, "Give a man a fish and he eats for a day. Teach him how to fish and he eats for a lifetime." [3] Language learning strategies can be that fishing pole. They are the tools which not only enable language learners to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning, but also provide the methods to make the learning process more efficient.

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[2]Douglas Barnes, From Communication to Curriculum (London: Penguin, 1976: 2d ed., Portsmouth, NH: Boyton/Cook, 1992)

[3]Anita Wenden, Learner Strategies for Learner Autonomy:Planning and Implementing Learner Training for Language Learners (New York: Prentice Hall, 1991), p.1

DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS

The research to date provides no consistent answer to the question of what exactly a learning strategy is. Wenden elaborates

> Researchers in second language acquisition have not been able to come to a consensus regarding what a learning strategy is. This is reflected in the literature where strategies are referred to as 'techniques', 'potentially conscious plans', 'consciously employed operations', 'learning skills', 'basic skills', 'cognitive abilities', 'problem solving procedures', and 'language learning behaviors'.[4]

Table 1 shows a variety of definitions from leaders in the research of learning strategies. From these definitions and other work in the area a number of characteristics of language learning strategies have been noted.

Table 1
Definitions

researcher	definition
O'Malley and Chamot (1990)	Learning strategies (are) the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn or retain new information. (p.1)
Wenden (1991)	Learning strategies are mental steps or operations that learners use to learn a new language and to regulate their efforts to do so. (p.18)
Oxford (1990)	Learning strategies are steps are steps taken by students to enhance their own learning... they are tools for active, self-directed invovlement, which is essential for developing communicative competence. (p.1) Learning strategies are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed,

[4]Wenden, Learner Stategies for Learner Autonomy , p.18

	more effective and more transferrable to new situations. (p.8)
Ellis (1994)	Some form of activity, mental or behavioral, that may occur at a specific stage in the overall process of learning and communication (p.295)

First, strategies are generally **goal-directed**.[5] The goals can be either general or specific. The most general and basic goal they facilitate is language acquisition, i.e. that the learners reach a certain level of target language competence. Another example of a long-term goal is one set by a student who wishes to learn enough English to be able to shop, make hotel reservations and handle ordering in a restaurant before a trip abroad next year. Finishing a translation of a newspaper article due next Thursday is an example of a short-term goal for which language learning strategies could be used. Goals allow students to plan for their own learning.

Language learning strategies are also **problem-oriented**.[6] [7] They are used as tools when there is a "task to accomplish."[8] A learner may, for example, feel very stressed when using the target language. She may, therefore, use affective strategies to monitor and understand her feelings, and self-management strategies to arrange low-risk opportunities for practice. However, Ridley comments

> We have argued that learners will tend to notice problems and that they will therefore deploy strategies for coping with the problem. However, human beings rely on cognitive strategies in order to function normally therefore problematicity is not a prerequisite for strategy use.[9]

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[5]Jennifer Ridley, Developing Learners' Thinking Skills, Learner Autonomy Series, ed. David Little, no. 6 (Dublin: Authenik Language Learning Resources Ltd., 1997), p.31
[6]Wenden, p.18
[7]Ellis, p.532
[8]Rebecca L. Oxford, Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know (Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1990): p.11
[9]Ridley, p.31

Maybe it is not a prerequisite but most strategies do tend to be applied to solve some problem. Further, some strategy researchers distinguish between goals and problems (for example, Ridley) and some do not (for example, Ellis and Oxford).

Learning strategies **can be learned**. Unlike other more stable factors in the rate of language acquisition, such as intelligence or learning style, the learning strategies one uses are amenable to change. As Oxford says, "Bad strategy users can learn new strategies. Good strategy users can become better."[10] Wenden adds, "Ineffective strategies can be rejected, new strategies can be learned and well-functioning strategies can be adapted to new situations." [11] For example, a student in one of my classes had been working on memorizing his dictionary for years. He was up to "T", but could hardly put a sentence together and of course could not remember most of the A-Ss. For a number of reasons, some to be discussed later, it was very difficult for this man to give up his favored strategy, but it was possible.

Since learning strategies can be learned and changed, they enable the learner to become more self-directed. The learner's success or failure becomes a matter of the skillful or unskillful use of strategies rather than solely the result of factors that the learner cannot change.

Language learning strategies may be **consciously employed**. As Ellis says, "Learners are generally aware of the strategies they use and can identify what they consist of." [12] As previously noted, when learners have a language problem, task or purpose they apply learning strategies to meet that need. Most of the research to date has relied on learner reports of what strategies they used or were in the process of using during a given language task. If language learning strategies were all used

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[10]Oxford, Language Learning, p.12
[11]Wenden, p.18
[12]Ellis, p.532

unconsciously, these studies would have yielded no results. However, consciousness is also a gray area. Again Ridley says,

> Significantly, the notions of selection and purpose, as they are used in connection with cognitive strategies, are not necessarily synonymous with consciousness. In other words, we employ strategies without necessarily being aware that we are doing so. [13]

O'Malley and Chamot add that a learning strategy is, "a strategy which is potentially controllable, an operation mental or concrete which could be deployed deliberately but may also be resorted to automatically." [14] After the learner reaches a certain level of expertise and experience in using a strategy, it may become automatic. Even the potential for awareness, however, is important, because if a learner is not aware of her learning strategies she can neither monitor their effectiveness nor change them.

These strategies are **sometimes observable**.[15] [16]They include both behavioral and mental operations. Behavioral strategies include actions such as asking a native speaker for clarification or listing vocabulary words in divisions according to meaning. Mental strategies include tactics like using imagery to remember those vocabulary words or checking one's emotional state. Of course, one can see what a learner is doing but not what the learner is thinking, so behavioral strategies are observable and mental strategies are not. One should be aware in assessing students strategy use that since mental strategies are not observable it is not enough just to watch a student to find out what strategies that student is using.

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[13]Ridley, p.29
[14]J. Michael O'Malley and Anna Uhl Chamot, Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990) :p.
[15]Oxford, Language Learning, p.12
[16]Wenden, p.18

Language learning strategies **contribute both indirectly and directly to second language learning.** "In the main, strategies contribute indirectly to learning by providing learners with data about the L2 which they can then process."[17] Indirect strategies could be something like listening more carefully every time the teacher says, "This will be on the test." An example of a direct strategy is one that contributes directly to the retention of a lexical item such as picturing a skier in order to remember the Japanese word for like, *suki.*

Language learning strategies **can be performed both in the learner's first and second language.**[18] In fact most of the research in language learning strategies, especially children's strategy use, has come from first language research, generally with reading and writing strategies. An example of an L1 (first language) strategy is using context clues to guess the meaning of an unknown word . However, even a learner who uses context clues to find meaning when dealing in the L1 may be less tolerant of ambiguity when working in the L2 (second language) and being afraid to guess look up every unknown word in the dictionary. Learners do not necessarily transfer the strategies used in L1 to L2, but they use strategies in dealing with both.

Language learning strategies are also **flexible.**[19] The same learner can use different strategies for different tasks. Returning to the example of the unknown word in a text, a student might be perfectly content to guess meaning from context when reading for pleasure or as part of a long reading assigned for class, but may turn to a dictionary when reading in order to do an exact translation. In addition, what is an effective strategy for one learner is not necessarily effective for another. For example, a shy learner might have to use more affective strategies than an outgoing learner. Flexibility

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[17]Ellis, p. 532
[18]Ellis, p.532
[19]Oxford, Language Learning , p.13

in strategy use is vital and will be discussed further in describing the "good language learner".

The use of language learning strategies is **influenced by a variety of factors**. Oxford has contributed greatly in this area from results she gained from using the survey of language learning strategies that she developed, the SILL. According to Oxford, age, sex, nationality, teacher expectations, motivational factors and purpose for learning all have an effect on learning .[20] Wenden would add the following factors: learning style, cognitive style, personality, intelligence and language aptitude.[21] Beginners also tend to use different strategies than students at a higher proficiency level. Thus, who the learner is very much affects what strategies she will use.

Although the exact definition of a strategy remains in debate, perhaps one can look at strategies broadly as Ellis did, as a "mental or behavioral activity".[22] Their purpose becomes clear under the goal/problem-oriented section of their characteristics. Oxford would add that they not only make learning more active, manageable, and efficient, but also "more enjoyable". [23] As I stated in the introduction, I see language learning strategies as the tools which not only enable second and foreign language learners with the ability to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning, but also the methods to make the learning process more efficient.

Types of Language Learning Strategies and Classification Systems

While most of the initial work on language strategies identified the techniques used by good language learners, the next trend seemed to be a search for a logical means of

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[20]Oxford, p.13
[21]Wenden, p. 36
[22]Ellis, p.529
[23]Oxford, Language Learning, p. 8

classification of those strategies. Just as the definition of a language learning strategy varies from researcher to researcher, so does the system of classification. In this section two major classification schemes will be cited and their differences and similarities, and advantages and disadvantages of the systems will be discussed.

The problems associated with the lack of a standard classification system have been noted by a number of researchers. Oxford states

> Almost two dozen L2 strategy classification systems have been divided into the following groups: (1) systems related to successful language learners (Rubin, 1975); (2) systems based on psychological function (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990); (3) linguistically based systems dealing with guessing, language monitoring, formal and functional practice (Bialystok, 1981) or with communication strategies like paraphrasing or borrowing (Tarone, 1983); (4) systems related to separate language skills (Cohen, 1990); and (5) systems based on different styles or types of learners (Sutter,1989). The existence of these distinct strategy typologies indicates a major problem in the research area of L2 learning strategies: lack of a coherent, well accepted system for describing these strategies.[24]

Although it would be more conducive to research to have a standard classification system, especially for research purposes, there is much to be gained from examining the lists and classification systems already available. The methods of classification may be different, but the strategies listed are largely the same.

Perhaps the most frequently noted classification system cited in current research, especially in North America, is that of Chamot and O'Malley.[25] (See Table 2) Their system is grounded in the tenets of cognitive psychology and provides a solid link between the research on language learning strategies in the L1 and L2. Their categories

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[24]Rebecca L. Oxford, "Language Learning Strategies: An Update" ERIC Digest.(Washington, D.C., ERIC Clearinghouse of Languages and Linguistics, 1984), EDRS, ED376707.

[25]Chamot, CALLA Handbook, pp. 62-63.

are clear and logical. They have built their categories on existing research, as well as carrying out multiple studies on their own. They have also successfully applied their classification system in the classroom as an important part of their Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA).

Table 2

LEARNING STRATEGIES IN THE CLASSROOM

Chamot and O'Malley (1994)

Metacognitive Strategies

STRATEGY NAME	DEFINITION	DESCRIPTION
Planning		
Advance Organization	Preview Skim Gist	Previewing the main ideas and concepts of a text; identifying the organizing principle.
Organizational Planning	Plan what to do	Planning how to accomplish the learning task; planning the parts and sequence of ideas to express.
Selective Attention	Listen or read selectively Scan Find specific information	Attending to key words, phrases, ideas, liguistic markers, types of information.
Self-management	Plan when, where, and how to study	Seeking or arranging the conditions that help one learn.
Monitoring		
Monitoring Comprehension	Think while listening Think while reading	Checking one's comprehension during listening or reading.
Monitoring Production	Think while speaking	Checking one's oral or written production while it is taking place
Evaluating		
Self-assessment	Check back Keeping a learning log	Judging how well one has accomplished a learning task.

Table 2 continued

Cognitive Strategies		
Resourcing	Use reference materials	Using reference materials such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, or textbooks.
Grouping	Classify Construct graphic organizers	Classifying words, terminology, quantities, or concepts according to their attributes.
Note-taking	Take notes on idea maps t-lists, etc.	Writing down key words and concepts in abbreviated verbal, graphical, or numerical form.
Elaboration of Prior Knowledge	Use what you know Use background know-ledge Make analogies	Relating known information and making personal associaitons.
Summarizing	Say or write the main ide	Making a mental, oral, or written summary of information gained from listening or reading.
Deduction/Induction	Use a rule/ Make a rule	Applying or figuring out rules to understand a concept or a complete learning task.
Imagery	Visualize Make a picture	Using mental or real pictures to learn new information or solve a problem.
Auditory Representation	Use your mental tape recorder	Replaying mentally a word, phrase, or piece of information.
Making Inferences	Use context clues Guess from context Predict	Using information in the text to guess meanings of new items or predict up-coming information.
Social / Affective Strategies		
Questioning for Clarification	Ask questions	Getting additional explanation or verification from a teacher or other expert.
Cooperation	Cooperate Work with classmates Coach each other	Working with peers to complete a task, pool information, solve a problem get feedback.
Self-Talk	Think-Positive!	Reducing anxiety by improving one's sense of competence.

Chamot and O'Malley's has changed gradually as they have done more and more research. The 1985 teachers' guide by Gloria Stewner-Manzares, which they co-authored, classified strategies in only two groups' cognitive and metacognitive.[26] This distinction first appeared in the L1 research.

Metacognitive strategies are those that learners employ to orchestrate their learning. They deal with the different aspects of the language learning process more than the specific language tasks. As Chamot and O'Malley put it, they are those in which

> students reflect on and identify their abilities and approaches to learning. The metacognitive strategies include planning, monitoring, and evaluating strategies. That is, learners set a goal for and decide how to organize a task before embarking on it, regulate their performance as they engage in the task, and check their performance after completing the task. [27]

Metacognitive strategies are the administrative strategies or management strategies. They are how learners decide things like how they learn best, what their overall plans for language learning are, what a particular learning task involves, what the best methods to meet those demands are, and whether or not the methods they have chosen are working or did work. They could be compared to the operating system on a computer, without which none of the applications could function properly.

As in Chamot and O'Malley's scheme, metacognitive strategies are usually divided into those involved in planning, monitoring and evaluating. Planning deals with the general or the specific. For example, before a student attempts to memorize a list of vocabulary words, she thinks of how to memorize them most quickly. That is planning

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[26]Gloria Sterwner-Mananares et al., Learning Strategies in English as a Second Language Instruction: A Teacher's Guide (Washington, D.C.: Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs, 1985), EDRS, ED338107, p.14.

[27]Anna Uhl Chamot and J. Michael O'Malley, "The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach: A Model for Linguistically Diverse Classrooms," The Elementary School Journal 96 (1996), p.76.

related to a specific task. However, the same student might also make general plans like long-term language goals, or where to find a quiet room to study or an expert speaker with whom to practice. According to Wenden, planning is how "learners determine what their objectives are and how they will achieve them." [28]

Monitoring usually occurs in the process of a language task as students check their performance against some standard. For Chamot and O'Malley it includes "checking, verifying or correcting one's performance in the course of a language task."[29] It also involves identifying problems in performance, their causes and how to correct them.

Evaluation generally occurs after a language task is completed. Students judge their success or failure to meet standards. They may also evaluate the success of the methods or strategies they used in carrying out the task or the validity of the standards they have set.

Closely related to metacognitive strategies is metacognitive knowledge. Chamot and O'Malley make special note of it in their later work. They define metacognitive knowledge as "understanding one's own learning processes, the nature of the learning task and the strategies that should be effective." [30] Whereas metacognitive strategies are methods learners use to control their learning, metacognitive knowledge is the awareness that makes this possible.

Wenden divides the metacognitive knowledge necessary for language learning into three groups in Table 3 : person, strategic, and task knowledge[31]. Metacognitive strategies and knowledge give learners the power to guide and adjust their own learning.

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[28]Wenden, Learning Strategies, pp25-27.
[29] Anita Wenden, Learner Training in Foreign/Second Language Learning: A Curricular Perspective for the 21st Century , EDRS, ED416673, p.7.
[30]Chamot, CALLA Handbook. , p.64.
[31]Wenden, Learning Strategies , p. 49.

Table 3
Knowledge about language learning

Kind	Defining Aspects
Person	Cognitive factors that facilitate learning Affective factors that facilitate learning
Strategic	Effective strategies for particular tasks General principles to determine strategy choice
Task	Task purpose or significance Nature of language and communication Need for deliberate effort Task demands -knowledge required to do the task -how to complete a task: steps and strategies -level of difficulty

Cognitive strategies are another of the major strategy categories. Returning to the student who has a list of vocabulary words to remember, she would use metacognitive strategies to analyze the task, to plan how she is going to memorize those words and to check her progress during and after the task It is a cognitive strategy, however, that she would actually use to manipulate the material so that she can learn more efficiently. For example, she might divide that vocabulary list into meaningful categories, or link the vocabulary items to visual images, sounds or words in her native language. All these are cognitive strategies. There are many more cognitive strategies than there are metacognitive strategies, because they are more task specific. Effective learners use many kinds of cognitive strategies in order to cope with the many kinds of tasks required to learn a language . Rubin (1987) in Ellis refers to them as "the steps or operations used

in problem-solving that require direct analysis, transformation or synthesis of learning materials."[32] Both Table 2 and Table 4 list many specific examples.

Social and affective strategies are the last group of strategies presented in Chamot and O'Malley's later work. While earlier work seemed to focus on the student as a thinker, with the inclusion of social and affective strategies as a separate category in their learning strategy scheme, in their later work they move toward a more holistic view of the student. They define this category of strategies as, "interacting with others for learning or using affective control for learning."[33]

Social strategies involve working with others to help one learn. Asking questions, asking for clarification and talking to peers or expert speakers in the target language all fall into this category. In light of the research on the value of cooperative learning and since the purpose of language is communication and thus necessarily involves others, the importance of social cannot be overvalued. Affective strategies involve the emotional side of the student. Chamot and O'Malley list "self-talk", positive thinking, as their entry under this category.[34]

Although they state the importance of both social and affective strategies, Chamot and O'Malley's list of strategies under this category is meager. Oxford, whose system of classification follows in Table 5, [35] is much more thorough in this area. Since students so often speak of being "shy" or "afraid" to use the target language and more often feel so without saying, exploration into the affective strategies is vital. Students need to be taught to explore both what they are feeling toward the language learning process and that most learners share many of the same anxieties. Students need to be reassured that almost everybody feels afraid to try the target language in one situation or

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[32]Ellis, p.536.
[33]Chamot, CALLA Handbook , p.64.
[34]Ibid., p. 63.
[35]Oxford, Language Learning Strategies, pp. 18-21.

another, so the student should use that anxiety to give that little extra push or arrange circumstances to provide opportunities for practice in a lower-risk environment. Emotions heavily influence learning and should not be ignored.

Oxford surveyed the research on language learning strategies to compile a composite list (See Table 4). The breadth of her list is impressive. Many of the items overlap those on Chamot and O'Malley's list. In fact, many strategies listed in Oxford's list were taken from their research. Oxford also draws from her own research and that of many others. Therefore, when a teacher is considering developing a curriculum of learner strategies the list's comprehensiveness makes it invaluable. As previously mentioned, in the areas of affective and social strategies, in her more holistic view of the student, she excels.

Oxford divides language learning strategies into two major divisions: those that directly affect language acquisition and those that indirectly affect language acquisition.[36] In the direct group she includes memory, cognitive and compensation strategies. In the indirect group she places affective, social and metacognitive strategies. Within each of these major categories she places many specific strategies. The distinction between direct and indirect language learning strategies has proved "troublesome", as Rod Ellis explains

> The (Oxford's) scheme is marred by a failure to make a clear distinction between strategies directed at learning the L2 and those directed at using it. Thus, somewhat confusingly, 'compensation strategies' are classified as a direct type of 'learning strategy'. In this Oxford departs from other researchers, who treat compensation strategies as distinct from learning strategies. (e.g.Rubin,87) However, the organization of the strategies into a hierarchy of levels and the breadth of the taxonomy is impressive.[37]

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[36]Oxford, Langauge Learning Strategies, p.15.
[37]Ellis, p. 537.

Compensation strategies are those that learners use to get around weaknesses in their language proficiency. For example, a learner might not know the word for rabbit in the target language so he could instead refer to a cute animal with long ears that jumps, or avoid conversations about bunnies. Oxford is not alone in including compensation strategies within learning strategies (e.g. Ridley)[38] but it is not usual. Compensation strategies do not directly facilitate language learning, but whether to include them in the language learning strategy group goes back to the problem of lack of a consistent, accepted definition of language learning strategies. However, to ignore Oxford's scheme because of this inconsistency would be a terrible loss.

Table 4

Classification of Strategies

Oxford (1990)

(Compiled based on Oxford's ideas in *Language Learning Strategies; What Every Teacher Should Know*. The letters in brackets show the skill area to which the strategy can be applied: **R**eading, **W**riting, **S**peaking, **L**istening, or **A**ll.)

Direct Strategies

I. **Memory**

A. Creating mental linkages

1. grouping--classifying or reclassifying material into meaningful units (L,R)
2. associating/elaborating--relating new language information to concepts already in memory (L,R)
3. placing new words into a context--placing a word or phrase in a meaningful sentence, conversation, or story in order to help one remember it (A)

B. Applying images and sounds

1. using imagery--relating new language information to concepts already in memory by means of meaningful visual imagery (L,R)
2. semantic mapping --(L,R)

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[38]Ridley, p.32.

3. using keywords--remembering a new word by using auditory or visual links (L,R)
4. representing sounds in memory--(L,R,S)

C. Reviewing well
1. structured reviewing--reviewing in carefully spaced intervals (A)

D. Employing action
1. using physical response or sensation--physically acting out expression or sensation (L,R)
2. using mechanical techniques--using creative but tangible techniques,especially involving something which is concrete, in order to remember something (L,R,W)

II. Cognitive

A. Practicing
1. repeating--(A)
2. formally practicing with sounds and writing systems--practicing sound, intonation, not meaning (L,S,W)
3. recognizing and using formulas and patterns--being aware of and/or using routine formulas and unanalyzed patterns (A)
4. recombining--(S,W)
5. practicing naturalistically--using language in real settings... includes modified materials, class activities, realia, computer (A)

B. Receiving and sending messages
1. getting the idea quickly-- skimming, scanning (L,R)
2. receiving and sending messages--e.g. dictionaries, wordlists, books, television, tapes (A)

C. Analyzing and reasoning
1. reasoning deductively-- top-down,using general rules and applying them to new target situations (A)
2. analyzing expressions--determining the meaning of a new expression by breaking it into parts (L,R)
3.analyzing contrastively --analyzing across languages (L.R)
4. translating--L1 to L2 or L2 into L1(A)
5. transferring--directly applying knowledge of words or concepts from one language to another (A)

D. Creating structure for input and output
1. taking notes--shopping list, standard outline, T-formation (L,R,W)
2. summarizing--(L,R,W)
3. highlighting --using capital letters, stars, bolds, boxes, color (L,R,W)

III.Compensation Strategies

A. Guessing intelligently

1. using linguistic clues-- clues in language, e.g. suffixes, prefixes, word order (L,R)
2. using other clues --context, situation, topic or personal knowledge (L,R)

B. Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing

1. switching to mother tongue (S)
2. getting help (S)
3. using mime or gesture (S)
4. avoiding communication partially or totally (S)
5. selecting the topic (S,W)
6. adjusting or approximating message (S,W)
7. coining words (S,W)
8. using a circumlocation or synonym (S,W)

INDIRECT STRATEGIES

I. **Metacognitive Strategies**

A. Centering your learning

1. overviewing and linking with already known material (A)
2. paying attention--includes selective and directive attention (A)
3. delaying speech production to focus on listening (L,S)

B. Arranging and planning your learning

1. finding out about language learning (A)
2. organizing--schedule, physical, environment, language learning notebook (A)
3. setting goals and objectives--long and short-term (A)
4. identifying the purpose of a language task-- purposeful listening, reading, speaking, writing (A)
5. planning for a language task--includes four steps: describing the task, determing its requirements, checking one's own linguistic resources, determining additional language elements or functions necessary for the task or situation (A)
6. seeking practice opportunities (A)

C. Evaluating your learning

1. self-monitoring
2. self-evaluation

II. **Social Strategies**

A. Asking questions

1. asking for clarification or verification (L.R)
2. asking for correction (S,W)

B. Cooperating with others

1. cooperating with peers (A)

2. cooperating with proficient speakers (A)

C. Empathisizing with others

1. developing cultural understanding (A)
2. becoming more aware of others' thoughts and feelings (A)

III. **Affective Strategies (all affective strategies apply to all skill areas)**

A. Lowering your anxiety

1. using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation
2. using music
3. using laughter-- e.g. funny movies, books, jokes

B. Encourage yourself

1. making positive statements--written or oral
2. taking risks wisely
3. rewarding yourself

C. Taking your emotional temperature

1. listening to your body
2. using a checklist
3. writing a language learining diary (to keep track of events and feelings)
4. discussing your feelings with someone else

WHY TEACH LEARNING STRATEGIES?

In order to make a case for the importance of teaching learning strategies, one must draw from research. As previously stated, the first research into language learning strategies generally focused on characteristics common to those labeled as good learners by their teachers. Researchers are still writing on the good learner today. Until the time of that first research, the good learner was thought just to have good language aptitude. At the tail end of the grammar-translation trend and in the midst of the audio-lingual days, the idea of learners influencing their own learning must have been quite novel. The emphasis was on a behavioral view of teaching with teacher input and learner output, repetition and production, stimulus and reaction with very little importance placed on the one doing the learning. It was more like a rat pushing a lever.

As Ellis says, "It is easy to overstate the commonalties in strategy use among good learners."[39] After all, researchers are looking for commonalties. Since most of the data come from self-report as students think-aloud during a language task or report their strategies after a task, results are hard to place in well-defined categories. However, ground-breaking researchers such as Joan Rubin (1975, 1981) and N. Naiman (1978) showed substantial similarities in those good learners. [40] Ellis identifies an overall pattern of five "major aspects of successful language learning" as evidenced in the good learner studies.

> (1) a concern for language form, (2) a concern for communication (functional practice), (3) an active task approach, (4) an awareness of the learning process, and (5) a capacity to use strategies flexibly in accordance with task requirements. [41]

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[39]Ellis, p.546.
[40]Ibid
[41]Ibid

A concern for the form of the target language means that good language learners look for patterns, systems and rules to make sense of the vast cognitive skill of language. In many current discussions of teaching one gets the impression that grammar or linguistic knowledge is useless. This is a misconception. Knowledge of form gives the learner a standard from which to monitor and evaluate learning. The patterns, systems and rules of language provide a short-cut to learning new language items, because the numerous items can be placed in logical groups instead of each being learned separately. It is in the overuse of rules to the sacrifice of content and communication in which the learner runs into trouble. The successful language learner is concerned with form as well as content. Flexibility in strategy use is the key.

The "concern for communication" highlights the successful learner's knowledge that the primary goal of language is communication. Successful learners attend to meaning. Patterns and formulas are the vehicles through which learners express meaning. If the learners are interested only in content, they will not reach a high level of fluency. However, one may create grammatically correct statements that mean absolutely nothing. Jennifer Ridley rounds out this line of thinking and leads to the other features of the good language learner:

> The most striking feature of this model group of successful learners is that they give an essentially balanced picture. On the one hand they pay close attention to formal features of the language as a system, and on the other hand they enjoy communicating with others in the target language, facing the potential risks which that involves. They are both inwardly and outwardly focused: they think about what they are learning, but they also learn through interaction with other people. They are emotionally intelligent in the sense that they know how to deal with whatever crops up, and they generally manage themselves well. While knowing that in fact all learners vary greatly in their learning and social behaviour, we can use

> the notion of balance as a yardstick in our attitude towards underachieving and non-reflective learners.[42]

Naiman et. al (1978) found that the learners in their study tended to emphasize fluency in the early stages of language acquisition and form in the later, while Lennon (1989) reported that very advanced students "were adept at alternating between a focus on learning the language and communicating it."[43]

An "active task approach" involves learners taking charge of their own learning. They think about the learning process and themselves as learners. They set their own goals, and arrange environmental factors so they can meet those goals. They are involved in their language learning rather than passive viewers of it. They make connections between what they know and what they are learning. They arrange conditions to help them learn.

Ellis's fourth characteristic of the good learner, "an awareness of the learning process", is similar to saying that these learners have "learned how to learn". They are aware of factors that affect their own learning like learning style and preferences. For example, Hiroshi, as a visual and tactile learner, knows he can best remember a by writing down a word and then seeing in print. Han knows that she remembers bests by working with other people so as soon as she learns a word she talks to her friends about it, asking for examples and testing using it on her own. This awareness would also include knowledge of the language learning process in general. For example, I know that once information makes it into short-term memory it can be easily lost, so I make note of important information, record it and practice it. As Dickinson puts it, "Successful language learners are by definition are those that know how to go about the business of learning in ways which are best for them."[44]

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[42]Ridley, pp. 53-54.
[43]Ellis, p.549.
[44]Leslie Dickinson, Learner Training for Languge Learning, Learner Autonomy Series,

At last in his fifth characteristic Ellis cites the successful learner's ability to use strategies flexibly depending on the task. The need for flexibility in the focus between content and form has already been mentioned. As students monitor their learning they will no doubt find that no one strategy works in every case, with every task. When they run into trouble they need to have the flexibility to change strategies until they find one that works.

Now that the characteristics of a good learner have been discussed, the question of the need for instruction in strategies to develop these characteristics arises. After all, many learners seem to develop these skills with no formal instruction in learning strategies. This, however, is not the case with a great many learners. In order to illustrate the lack of language awareness in most learners, Leslie Dickinson cites a pamphlet published by the Committee for Linguistics in Education:

> which includes a set of propositions (which) are true of very many first year (university) students even though many of them have chosen to specialize in the study of language
> - They find it hard to distinguish between a word's pronunciation and its spelling.
> - They are unaware that ordinary spoken language is tightly controlled by rules, believing that where speech is at variance with written form it is simply wrong.
> - They cannot define a single structural difference between their own language and some other language they studied at school.
> - They know virtually nothing about the structure of their own language.
> - They have very little terminology for discussing matters of style and other kinds of variation within their own language.
> - They know very little about the history of their own language or about its relationship with other languages.
> - They know nothing about how children learn their first language or about the part parents play in this [45]

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ed. David Little, no,2. (Dublin: Authentik Language Learning Resources Ltd., 1996), p.45

[45]Dickinson, p38.

These statements do not bode well for the state of linguistic awareness in "the average Joe" or even the academically above-average Joe. If learners know nothing of language, they cannot possibly control their own language learning process effectively, much less develop a systematic view of the target language. How can students show flexibility in strategy use if they know nothing of their own language, much less strategies? How could they pay attention to form if they have no knowledge of it? The development of an extensive repertoire of strategies and the flexibility to use them well is impossible for many without explicit instruction. As Oxford puts it, "Although learning is certainly part of the human condition, conscious skill in self-directed learning must be sharpened through training."[46] Dickinson comments, "If there is a relationship between skill and language learning and language awareness, then this list demonstrates that in Britain anyway, something needs to be done about language awareness."[47]

Most learners also tend not to be active learners. Wenden cites Schoenfield's (1982) work with American college freshmen. He

> noted that many enter the classroom completely unaware that they can observe, evaluate and change their own cognitive behavior. It is he says, as if their mind was an independent entity and they passive spectators of its activities. It has not occurred to them that they might be able to be actively involved in their own learning. They are not aware of , and therefore cannot believe in, their intellectual potential. These freshmen were native English speakers, but their attitude can also typify language learners. [48]

From the time they are children, most are taught that their teachers are the ones primarily responsible for their learning. After the first years of learning, including much of the learning of the native language, which takes place outside of formal instruction,

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[46]Oxford, Language Learning Strategies, p. 201.
[47]Dickinson, p. 38.
[48]Wenden, Language Strategies, p.57.

learners enter school and turn over control to the teacher. Teachers plan what to teach. Teachers decide how their students are to learn it, and monitor them closely to determine how well they are learning along the way and if they have mastered the given material in the teacher-determined period of time. Students are taught to be passive consumers of knowledge. Teachers, on the other hand, are taught to be the sole decision-makers by their institutions and are even made to feel they are cheating their students if they are not. Thus teachers often assume responsibilities that would be better left to the learner, those that would help the learner "learn how to learn". Allwright calls this teacher "overload". She explains,

> Teacher overload often entails learner underinvolvement since teachers are doing work learners could more profitably do for themselves. This involvement does not just mean activity however...this whole-person involvement should be related not simply to 'participation in classroom activities' but to the participation in decision-making, and in the whole business of the management of language learning [49]

Teachers need to reevaluate their roles so that they can help learners develop the learning strategies and linguistic awareness that are so necessary for language acquisition. Then the next batch of university students surveyed may be more aware of their possibilities as learners as well as the language process itself. In my own case, I only started planning my own learning when there was not a teacher around anymore to tell me what to do and how to do it. Stewner-Manzares states, "Teachers can benefit their students profoundly by showing them how to become independent learners who assimilate information provided by the teacher and then continue learning on their own." [50] The strategy teacher's role is not diminished but changed, to gradually making students more able to

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[49]Wenden, Learning Strategies, p.14.
[50]Stewner-Manzares, p.16.

use what they learn in the classroom to continue learning on their own. The ways to teach these vital areas will be discussed later in this paper.

Aside from the studies on the characteristics of a good learner and work on the classification language learning strategies, research has been done on the questions of whether or not strategies can be taught, whether they transfer from one task to another, and what particular strategies are effective.

If successful learners develop a flexible, varied group of language strategies and unsuccessful learners do not, can the unsuccessful learners be taught to use language strategies? Will the unsuccessful learners then become more successful? The answer to the first of these questions seems to be yes. Stewner-Manzanares, in her work with O'Malley and Chamot writes with no reservations on the importance of learning strategies.

> First, students who are successful language learners use such strategies regularly: good learners, like good teachers know how to organize and use information most effectively for acquiring new skills. Second, many students who do not yet use the strategies can learn how to use them. Third, students who have acquired learning strategies can better store and retrieve vocabulary and important concepts in the new language. Finally, students can use effective learning strategies when a teaching strategy is not working or the material is too difficult.[51]

Oxford along the same lines says

> Some aspects of the learners makeup, like general learning style or personality traits are difficult to change. In contrast, learning strategies are easier to teach and modify...Even the best learners can benefit from such training. Strategy training helps guide learners to become more conscious of strategy use and more adept at employing appropriate strategies. [52]

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[51]Stewner-Manzares, p.14.
[52]Oxford, Language Learning Strategies, p. 12.

Students do indeed seem able to learn new strategies with teacher guidance with many opportunities for practice and application. Their teachability is one of the basic characteristics of learning strategies previously mentioned. Because they can be taught and the strategies a learner uses change they should become an important curricular consideration.

As to the question of whether or not student performance improves after strategy training, the answer seems to be a more qualified yes. Teaching strategies for vocabulary learning seems to be quite effective, for example, Brown and Perry(1991) and Cohen and Apek(1981). [53] Good language learners have a wide variety of strategies that they can apply flexibly and effectively. That research, as explained earlier, is solid. In some studies strategy training worked. In some the results depended on factors like nationality. In some studies the effects were not significant. There is a strong correlation between strategy use and good language learners, but causation is harder to prove.

So, should teachers forget about teaching strategies? I think the answer is a definite no. Research has been hindered by a number of factors. One cannot even state definitively what a strategy is or how to classify it. In studies where strategy training did not work there seem to be a number of common problems. For example, Brown and Baker (1984)

> criticize earlier studies which taught the strategy in isolation from a context where it was to be used. Transfer in such cases, they maintain, is unlikely, while the more recent research, which contextualizes training, has had more successful outcomes.[54]

Other studies have run into trouble because subjects were not informed of the purpose of the strategy. Rather researchers just explained the techniques to perform a given task more effectively. In these cases, subjects performed the given task quite well but had no

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[53]Ellis, p.553-554, O'Malley, p.166.
[54]Wenden, Learning Strategies , p.107.

idea they should use it again on similar tasks in tests of strategy transfer tests. Finally, although my undergraduate statistics and research design professors might cringe at me saying so, maybe you just cannot test everything. To become proficient learners, students must find out what methods work for them. This involves developing awareness at many levels and gradually changing long-held attitudes. This would be very difficult to test in one study.

Competence in learning strategies does not mean that every student must find success with the same strategies. What may work well for one student may not work well for another. Again it is the flexibility to switch between form and fluency, the knowledge of one's individual learning style and language, and active learning that creates the good language learner. If one cuts up strategy training into single strategies, taught in a very limited period of time with little allowance for student choice in use, I do not know how one could imagine to get a full picture of the process. The kind of long-term studies needed to test this kind of competence development just have not been done and, considering the enormity of the task, probably will not be done in the near future.

HOW TO TEACH LEARNING STRATEGIES

After looking at various explanations on how to teach learning strategies, it appears that teaching learning strategies is much the same as teaching anything else well. First one starts with what the students already know, and then builds from there. Then the teach labels and presents what is to be learned, modeling the strategy. Gradually, students practice the strategy and then apply it on their own. Learners start as teacher dependent and then gradually take more responsibility for each individual strategy as well as strategy application and management in general. Wenden (1991),[55] Chamot and O'Malley (1994)[56] and Oxford (1990)[57] all provide very helpful guides to a teacher interested in starting out teaching language learning strategies. I have chosen Oxford's sequence (see Table 5) in particular because it is open enough to interpretation to fit my teaching style and includes most of the steps in the teaching methods proposed by Wenden and Chamot and O'Malley.

TABLE 5

STEPS IN THE STRATEGY TRAINING MODEL (Oxford, 1990)

1. Determine the learners' needs and the time available
2. Select strategies well
3. Consider integration of strategy training
4. Consider motivational issues
5. Prepare materials and activities
6. Evaluate the strategy training. [58]

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[55]Wenden, Learning Strategies, pp. 61-131.
[56]Chamot, CALLA Handbook, pp.64-79.
[57]Oxford, Language Learning Strategies, pp.193-212.
[58]Oxford, Language Learning Strategies, p.204.

Determining the learners' needs can be done in one of three main ways. The first method is to observe students to see what kind of strategies they are using. For example, how often is Tomomi using her dictionary or is Mario asking other students questions when he does not understand. Observation allows the teacher to access behavioral strategies. This method is valuable for assessing young children who are not as able to explain their thought processes as older children or adults. However, as mentioned earlier, observation only allows one to observe behavioral strategies, not mental strategies. It is also time consuming because the observer must keep track of each individual who may or may not be using a behavioral strategy during a given period of observation.

The second way of determining a student's strategy use,is by the use of introspective self-report. This invovles a student describing what strategies he is using during a given task, asking him to think aloud or write. This method is valuable because the student's report can deal with both behavioral and mental language learning strategies. It also enables the researcher to discover what strategies students use to perform a particular task. This technique often invovles using individual interviews, however it can also be performed on groups. Wenden gives a good example of students listening to a lecture given one sentence or idea at a time. After each statement the students write down what they are thinking or doing at that point.[59]

The third method, retrospective self-report, often takes the form of a survey. Students give a general statement about which strategies they use or have used. Unlike the think-aloud reports, students do not describe what they are doing at any given moment during this particular task. There can be a variety of questions in this kind of survey. The questions could be broad: for example, "Are there any special tricks or

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[59]Wenden, Learning Strategies, p.64.

techniques you use to help you learn English?" or "What advice would you give a younger student about how to learn English?" They can also be much more specific. For example, Kimura and Shimizu ask students to respond to the following questions using never, rarely, occasionally, usually or always:

Before Reading
Q1 Do you look at the title and pictures in order to figure out what the text is about?
Q2 Do you look through the whole text before you start reading?
While Reading
Q3 Do you concentrate on your reading?
Q4 Do you try to form an image of what you are reading in your mind?
Q5 Do you ask yourself questions in order to check your understanding?[60]

Their textbook is for Japanese students studying reading, but these questions and the rest of their questionnaire is based on strategies found to be effective in L1 reading. Oxford's *Strategy Inventory For Language Learning* (SILL)[61] has gone through a few versions and has been widely used. It also questions students about how much they use particular strategies. Students again answer using a scale from *never* to *always*. Some of the questions on the SILL include

1. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.
5. I use rhymes to remember new English words.
19. I look for words in my own language that are similar to English.
31. I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.[62]

These kinds of surveys allow the teacher to evaluate the strategy use of a whole class at one time. Teachers can write their own questions according to which strategies they wish to emphasize, or they can use one of the strategy inventories available. Through this type of survey results will be easier to classify than in think-alouds, but also more restricted

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[60]Shinji Kimura and Yuko Shimizu, Independent Reader; Improving Essential Reading Skills, (Tokyo: MACMILLAN LANGUAGE HOUSE LTD., 1998), pp.1-2.
[61]Oxford, Language Learning Stratgies, pp.277-299.
[62]Oxford, Language Learning Stratgies, pp.294-295.

because students are just saying how often they perform a certain strategy. They have little freedom to report strategies which they might be using but which do not appear on the survey.

I am going to teach two general English courses in a Japanese university this year. I will have about 30 students in each class, two classes in the course for first-year students and two in the one for second-year students. I have chosen to use Oxford's SILL to evaluate my students' strategy use during the first class. I will also add one question of my own, "What tricks or techniques do you use to help you learn English?" I have decided to use the SILL for the following reasons. First, it has been translated into Japanese. I do not expect students right out of high school to be able to talk about their learning strategies in English. Some of the vocabulary will come later in class discussion, other words may not be necessary to the learners. Secondly, the results will be easy to evaluate, especially since Oxford has divided the survey into the different strategy areas. I will have more than a hundred students and I want to be able to plan a strategy curriculum quickly. Finally, I want to give my students some idea of the strategies that can be used, so they can start thinking about their own strategy use and learning. The SILL is based on Oxford's system of classification which, as mentioned before, is very thorough.

The time a teacher can devote to teaching language learning strategies will be limited by a number of factors, for example total class time, material to be covered, and institutional policy. In my case, each course will consist of about thirty-three, ninety-minute classes. I am free to chose how much of that time I want to spend in any one area as long as I produce an exam and reasonable grades. In previous years these classes have centered around a reading and then students have written, discussed, and done listening activities associated with the topic of the reading. I plan to spend the first part of each class, probably about fifteen minutes naming or explaining a new strategy or doing more work with a previously-learned strategy, and then ask the students to use the

strategy they have learned in the activities done throughout the rest of the class. I also will ask students to record which strategies they are using and their effectiveness as homework.

Oxford's second step in the teaching process calls on the instructor to "select strategies well." Because of the vast quantity of strategies, Brown and Baker cite a study which lists more than one hundred strategies [63], one could never teach them all. Wenden notes the necessity of learner skill diagnosis

> a diagnosis of the learner's skills is justified by interventions that ignored the difference between good and poor learners. Raphael and Mckinney (1983) noted that in these situations interventions proved useful for less experienced learners but were disruptive when used with more mature learners, who either were already familiar with the skills or had developed others that were equally effective. The point is not that more mature learners would not benefit from further training but that the intervention should match the need. [64]

After a teacher ascertions what strategies students are currently using, she must plan where to go from there. Of course one factor in this selection must be the level of difficulty of the strategies. Difficulty cannot be judged by looking at the strategies to be introduced alone. One must also examine the strategies the students are currently using. One could say that addition is a relatively simple mathematical operation, but to a child who has not yet learned numbers it may be impossible. On the other hand, if a student is already doing calculus and the teacher insists they learn a new way to add, this is also disruptive. In the same way strategy selection which does not consider the learner's background, needs and preferences will not lead to good instruction. Active learning is built on a base of little steps, not outrageous leaps forward or backward.

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[63]Wenden, Learning Strategies, p. 108.
[64]Ibid

Along the same lines one should consider the learner's culture in the selection process. For example, O'Malley et al. (1985) taught secondary students to use imagery and grouping to learn vocabulary and found totally different results in Asians and Hispanic subjects. Although Hispanic students' performance improved after strategy training and they seemed to enjoy the training, the Asian students who did not receive training actually outperformed the Asian training group. The Asian students were already very good at rote memorization and the strategies which O'Malley "perceived as more sophisticated" actually confused the students and hindered their performance.[65]

This difference could be cultural or could be due to prior schooling as O'Malley and Chamot go on to note. Asian students have often had to memorize large sections of material and many facts to do well in an examination-based school admission system. Thus, this particular difference may be cultural or may be due to educational background. In any case, no one strategy works for everybody. In the initial evaluation of students' current strategy use, student preference should be considered. Oxford explains that from there

> If strong (cultural) biases exist, you might need to choose strategies that do not completely contradict what the learners are already doing, or if you choose to train strategies which are counter to what your students prefer, you might need to introduce the new strategies gradually while building on what the learners now prefer.[66]

Like any good teacher the good strategy teacher starts with what the students know and builds from there.

The number of new strategies introduced at any given time should be kept to a minimum. Some researchers suggest teaching one strategy at a time and only beginning

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[65]O'Malley, p.165.
[66]Oxford, Language Learning Stategies, p.205.

the next after the first has been completely mastered. However, Oxford, Chamot and O'Malley, and Wenden all suggest introducing compatible strategies together. Chamot and O'Malley seem to be at the conservative end on how many to teach, "In our experience there are some strategies that are so supportive of each other that they can be introduced simultaneously, e.g. activating prior knowledge and inferencing."[67] Oxford calls on teachers to "choose more than one kind of strategy to teach... by deciding the kinds of compatible, mutually supportive strategies that are important for your students."[68]Again, students need to experience a success as well as a sense of challenge. If the number of strategies introduced at one time is too great, they will be just as discouraged as if the strategies introduced were too difficult.

While during a single lesson students should not be overwhelmed with many all new strategies, over a period of time they should be introduced to strategies from all the major strategy groups, some that can be quickly learned and others that require more time but are both useful and have broad application. As previously stated, students need the cognitive strategies to perform language tasks more efficiently. They need the metacognitive to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning. They need the social to learn to work with others to accomplish language goals. Finally, they need the affective to learn in spite of many feelings that might make it difficult. All are necessary. The proportion of instruction time to devote to each should depend on the students current strategy use.

Oxford suggests that a combination of broad focus and narrow focus in strategy training is optimal. She explains this approach

> The trainer presents many strategies and strategy groups (broad focus), and learners are asked to rate subjectively the use of different strategies or strategy groups. Then given these ratings, specific strategies are selected

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[67]Chamot, CALLA Handbook, p.65.
[68]Oxford, Language Learning Strategies, p.205.

> for more focused training and assessment (narrow focus). This is an excellent way to approach strategy training. It gives learners the "big picture" at first, then moves into more specific strategies which the learners have chosen themselves. The element of learner choice in structuring training is very important, since learning strategies are the epitome of learner choice and self-direction.[69]

I include this here because, although the initial responsiblity for strategy selection is the teacher's, that should change. Ultimately, strategy selection ultimately should be the student's responsibility.

Pressley adds one more criterion for strategy selection. He asserts that teachers should choose strategies that have strong empirical support.[70] Pressley is an L1 strategy researcher and empirical support of strategies can be found more easily in L1 research than in L2 research because there has been much more extensive research in L1 learning strategies. Other places to look for strongly supported strategies would be the "good learner" studies or the classification systems previously mentioned.

In my own classes it is quite difficult to say exactly which strategies I will choose to emphasize when I have neither evaluated nor even met my students yet. The SILL will give me a picture of my students' areas of strength and weakness. I will use that picture to find a place to start, the right level of difficulty and familiarity. Throughout the course I will use student report to help me gauge if what I am doing is at the proper level. Eventually calling upon the students to evaluate themselves, gauging if what they are doing is right for them. There are both stereotypes about Japanese and definite trends in the educational system, but I think planning should be based on actual students rather than my preconceptions of them. Following the guidelines previously mentioned I think I will not go too far astray, but if I do those same guidelines will help me find my way back on track.

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[69]Oxford, Langauge Learning Strategies, p.206.
[70]Michael Pressley, Cognitive Strategy Instruction that Really Improves Children's Academic Performance, Cognitive Strategy Training Series, ed. Michael Pressley (Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books, 1995), p.

Oxford's third step is "integration of strategy training". This means that the content is of prime importance and strategy selection should be based on that content. Strategies need to be relevant to the language tasks in the class or the students cannot possibly appreciate their purpose and will not find them meaningful. Wenden expands on this idea,

> Strategies should be contextualized. Training should be in the context of the subject matter content and/or skill for which it is appropriate. It should be directed to specific language learning problems related to the learner's experience.[71]

Chamot and O'Malley put it another way, saying that teachers should "begin with the language and content goals, objectives, and tasks and then decide on the strategies that are appropriate and would be effective."[72]

When strategies are not used to meet the content goals, they lose their meaning. Research has shown that strategies taught in isolation from content are resistant to transfer to new language tasks. (Brown and Baker 1984)[73] Training divorced from other class content has also been found to be less successful than when tied together. If students do not understand the context in which to use a strategy, of course they cannot determine when to use that strategy on their own. In addition, tying strategies to class goals increases student motivation to use strategies.

This leads to Oxford's fourth step, "Consider motivational issues." She directs teachers to

> Decide whether to give grades or partial course credit for attainment of new strategies or whether to assume that learners will be motivated to learn strategies purely in order to become more effective learners.[74]

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[71]Wenden, Learning Strategies, p.107.
[72]Chamot, CALLA Handbook, p. 64.
[73]Wenden, Learning Strategies, p.
[74]Oxford, Language Learning Strategies, p 206.

A good plan probably includes both. If students find the strategies they are learning make completing class assignments or learning English in general easier, their motivation will be increased. However, the students that are usually the least motivated are generally the ones that have been labeled as poor learners. They are the ineffective learners that need strategy training the most. Making strategies a part of the course with credit attached might help them to at least give strategies a try. Another section of the student population has getting good grades as its primary goal and in fact gaining English proficiency as a far second. Teaching English majors in a Japanese university I am sure I will run into some of the latter. I will need to include strategies in their grade or they will not bother to make the effort to learn them. However, after initial success in strategy use, I hope my students will choose to use them on their own. Otherwise strategy training has no meaning after the course is over and the grades assigned. I will ask my students to record their strategy use and its effectiveness in a learning journal and give them credit for doing so in order to reach this goal.

Helping students succeed really does make them more motivated. Dickinson challenges S. Pit Corder's often quoted, "Given motivation anyone can learn a second language." [75] She says it is an easy out for teachers to attribute student failure to a lack of motivation. In order to understand how to make students motivated she uses the statement,

> "Nothing succeeds like success." I believe that success is the most potent motivating factor in language learning, and consequently that the main question is not "How can we motivate learners?", but "How can we help learners to be successful in their language learning?" [76]

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[75]Dickinson, p.61.
[76]Ibid

I believe if I play my cards right students will find success in using language learning strategies and thus will be motivated to use them. To me it is incredibly motivating to know that I can take charge of my own learning and help myself succeed, rather than sitting around helpless in the face of learning problems. I hope to help both the good-grade seekers and those who think they are poor learners discover this through little everyday successes.

Culture also arises under the area of motivation. Oxford describes what could be a typical class in a Japanese university

> If learners are brought up all their lives to prefer a particular learning strategies, like analyzing grammar or memorizing word lists, they may not be highly motivated to drop these preferences and instantly learn a whole new set of strategies. Or they might become confused. You need to be sensitive to learners' original strategy preference and the motivation that propels these preferences. Being sensitive to this issue does not mean, however, that you should avoid introducing new strategies. It means that you need to phase in very new strategies gently and gradually, without whisking away students' "security blankets", no matter how dysfunctional you may consider the old strategies to be.[77]

Japanese secondary schools still tend to treat English as if it were a dead language emphasizing grammar and vocabulary. Although this remains in question at this point in time, my students' learning strategies will probably be quite different from those I consider optimal. Strategy instruction in their class will have to start from their level, not mine.

Returning to the example of my student who was up to T in memorizing the dictionary. I consider this to be a very dysfunctional strategy. However, just telling my student what he was doing was idiotic would hardly put me in the running for teacher of the year. This man was the busy president of a successful company. After working amazingly long hours all day, he would begin his memorization. He usually finished

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[77]Oxford, Language Learining Strategies, p.207.

about three o'clock in the morning and he would wake at six to begin the same routine. By the time I met him, he had already been doing this for years. Knowing what I know now, I do not think I would attempt to alter his memorization techniques. I know he was good at memorizing. I would start building more effective strategies in which he did not have huge emotional investment, working on something he was already doing that was close to a functional strategy and gradually helping him to figure out on his own that what he was doing was just not working.

Preparing materials is the next step in Oxford's plan. The keys to good materials preparation have all been introduced previously. The materials should be those normally used for any given class. Strategies should be initially introduced by the teacher as an aid in understanding the regular materials and performing class work. The level of difficulty of the materials should be appropriate to the student's level. Tasks should be at a level of difficulty such that the student needs to use the strategy to complete them but not so difficult that they are hopeless even if the strategy is used. After the strategy is introduced students need to use more regular class materials to practice it and learn to transfer the strategy to new language tasks. Finally, some kind of record of strategy use, application, and evaluation should be designed, preferably by the learner.

In my classes, in addition to the regular class textbook, I will use both learning posters and learning journals. Every time I introduce a new strategy in class I will make a poster including the name of the strategy, its purpose and possible uses. This will serve as a record of the strategies introduced and as a resource for students to return to as necessary.

The learner journals, as mentioned earlier, will be graded. They will be a means by which students can keep track of what we do in class and their strategy use. Each notebook will begin with each learner's SILL to help learners keep track of the strategies they used initially and the different kinds of strategies available to them. In the next class students will record what we did in class, the material covered on the learning

posters, individual notes and how they can apply both new and previously introduced strategies inside and outside class. They will comment on the usefulness of the various stategies. Students will also note language goals and problems in each entry. I also like to receive feedback on my class in general so the journals will also include that.

Another important aspect of most strategy training models, and sixth on Oxford's list, is that training should be completely informed. The purpose of each strategy must be explicitly stated. Students must know the value of the strategy before they are required to use it. Wenden explains at length

> Research has shown that giving students information about the value of the strategy, i.e. about where and how often it may be used, greatly enhances the positive outcomes of training studies(e.g. Paris et al, 1982) Brown and Baker (1984) consider informed training is, in effect, training for lateral transfer. When students are given information about where a strategy can be used, it will be more likely that they will use it not only in the training context but in a variety of other appropriate settings.[78]

When students are just told what to do to accomplish a particular task, they generally do that one task quite well, but show no transfer to other tasks. They cannot apply the strategy to "real life". [79]

Before introducing a strategy I will give students a task typical of one in which that strategy could be used. I will ask them to do the task and then dicuss how they did it in small groups. This will get them thinking about their own strategies and give me task-specific information on my students' strategy use. From there I will name the strategy I wish to introduce, connect it with some of the strategies the students mentioned, and model its use on the task the students just completed, think aloud. Then students will perform a similar task in small groups taking turns thinking- aloud. Oxford,

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[78]Wenden, Learning Strategies, p. 105.
[79]Ibid

Chamot and O'Malley, and Wenden all write of procedures similar to the one above to inform students both on strategy use in general and on specific strategies.

In my classes I will tell students the purpose, write it on the learning posters, show them how to apply it by modeling its use, ask them to apply it inside and outside, and to report of the effectiveness of that application. Learning a strategy without learning its application is meaningless. To show learners the meaning one must show them the application.

Oxford's seventh step, "evaluate the strategy training", needs to be carried out as much, or more by the learner than by the instructor. As previously noted, the ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate one's own learning are metacognitve skills vital to the good learner. As Oxford puts it, "Learners' own comments about their stategy use are part of the training itself. These assessments provide practice with the strategies of self-monitoring and self-evaluating."[80] Learners need to think about how the strategies presented in class work for them. They need to consider what kinds of tasks call for what kind of strategies. Wenden cites Brown and Palinscar (1982)

> Research reports on strategy instruction in non-ESL contexts have demonstrated that learners who were trained to monitor and evaluate their own use of strategies were also more likely to continue using them and to initiate their use in a variety of contexts.[81]

In class the teacher generally teaches the strategies that seem most appropriate for most students. In my case it would be impossible for me to devise more than a hundred lesson plans. It is quite possible for me to ask students to comment on the strategies they learned in class and their effectiveness and monitor their application of strategies after

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[80]Oxford, Language Learning Strategies, p.208.
[81]Wenden, Learning Strategies, p. 106.

they have been covered in class. After that I can make suggestions I think would help them, but again it is up to the learner to proceed from there.

The question of how learners can evaluate their strategy use is answered in Chamot and O'Malley's list of student self-evaluation activities.

> Develop students' metacognitve awareness of which strategies work for them-and why-through self-evaluation activities such as:
> - Debriefing discussions after using strategies;
> - Learning logs or journals in which students describe and evaluate their strategy use;
> - Comparing their own performance on a task completed without using learning strategies and a similar task in which they applied strategies;
> - Checklists of their degree of confidence in completing specific academic tasks; and
> - Self-reports telling when they use or do not use a strategy, and why[82]

I will ask my students to do all these activities. The debriefing sessions will probably begin in small groups and wind up as whole class discussions. The rest of these activities will be in written form in the students' learning journals.

Certainly as far as long-term learning is concerned, the most important evaluator of learner strategy use is the learner. However, just as other strategies should be initially introduced by the teacher, then practiced until the students have developed the confidence and ability to use them on their own, so should self-monitoring. I will need to look at students' strategy use both for grading and planning future lessons. Whereas initially I will use retrospective self-report, the SILL, to find out about students' strategy use, During the course of the year I will use the other assessment measures previously described, observation and introspective self-report too. During class I will make it a point of observing and recording as much as I can. Even if a particular strategy is hard to actually see, I can use students' performance on classwork related to that strategy to help me find out if an individual student has learned to apply a perviously presented strategy.

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[82]Chamot, CALLA Handbook, p.71.

I will also ask students to write how they are doing a homework assignment as well as do it. This and the students' journals will give me lots of information to revise what I am doing and to help me check how much responsibility I need to take and how much I can turn over to the learners.

Evaluation is an ongoing process for the teacher as well as the student. To quote Wenden

> Informal observation of students can lead to questions and hypotheses that can be tested more specifically and systematically with self-reports. Information obtained in the from the initial or "diagonostic" self-reports can also serve to indicate what kinds of questions to include in the next self-report, administered either to the class or to individual students. Once this information is analyzed and recorded, teachers can use it to build up a "learning process file" on each student.[83]

I hope that by the end of the year, I will have a clear picture of how each student is learning and, more importantly, so will they.

After the evaluating stage the class moves to Oxford's last stage, "revise strategy training". Once the teacher and student have information about what strategies the student is using, how successfully he is using them, what kind of tasks he is using them on, and whether those strategies are being transfered to other tasks and maintained over time, they need to start back at the beginning of the process again. The process remains the same but each time the students and teacher go through it they move closer to understanding their own learning and taking charge of that learning.

In the same way, I hope to continually re-evaluate my attempts at language learning strategy instruction to help my students become more sucessful language learners.

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[83]Wenden, Learning Strategies, p.

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